



Eulogy of Sister Marion Murphy, BVM (John Patrice)
Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 20, 2018

Good morning. It is so good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Marion Murphy.

Marion Claire Murphy was born on March 14, 1936, in Chicago, the youngest child of John Joseph and Edna Conway Murphy. By the time she was born, the Murphy family had already experienced tremendous loss. While Marion joined three brothers, Robert, John and Raymond Patrick, two brothers, Donald and Edward, who were closest in age to her, had died as young children. Tragedy struck again when her mother suddenly dropped dead outside of Marion's classroom; Marion was only nine at the time. Her father did his best to raise his only daughter and instill strong values of faith and family.

As a child, Marion was part of a large, extended family – one of her beloved cousins was the late Bishop Edwin Conway who affectionately called her "Cookie" as many of her family did. Marion loved sports and strongly supported the Chicago White Sox and Notre Dame Football. She often told stories of playing football with the neighborhood boys in her childhood.

Marion attended Our Lady of the Angels grade school (OLA), where the BVMs reinforced the value of faith and instilled a love for education. She wrote, "These Sisters, as well as my family, gave me a strong belief that God calls each of us to a particular way of life. As I continued my high school education at St. Mary, I realized I was being called to membership with the BVMs." Marion entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1953, received the name John Patrice upon her reception on March 19, 1954, professed first vows on March 19 1956, and lived 65 years as a BVM.

Marion was an excellent teacher who taught first and second graders at St. Cecilia in Portland, Ore.; St. Odilo in Berwyn, Ill.; and Blessed Sacrament in Chicago as well as social studies at Our Lady of Lourdes in Chicago. She also served as principal at Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Angels, and at Sante Maria del Popolo in Mundelein, Ill. She believed strongly in the importance of Catholic education, especially for inner-city youth, writing, "It is one of the key ways in which one can learn about prayer and faith, and how to integrate prayer and faith in one's daily life. I believe Catholic schools are ones in which our young people can learn to live with a sense of hope as they face the challenges of a world, which does not always seem to live by faith and Christian values. I believe we can help our young people realize their goodness and value, and that above all, God loves [them]."

During her tenure as principal at OLA, Marion worked with police about the drug dealings of a local gang of teenage boys in an old abandoned burnt out building near the school. Despite great neighborhood opposition, Marion stood her ground, repeatedly called police and even videotaped suspicious activity. She was later vindicated when a police investigation resulted in the arrest of an adult who had been wholesaling drugs to the gang members who then sold them to high school and elementary students. Joan Keleher Doyle, BVM president at that time, commended her, "We here at Mount Carmel are in admiration of your courage in exposing the situation and in trying to protect the school children . . . to make yourself vulnerable, not only to harsh judgements, but also to physical harassment."

For 14 years, Marion served as tutor at the Westside Employment Education Center (WEEC), a BVM ministry site at Holy Family parish in Chicago that aided economically and educationally disadvantaged adults improve their quality of life. Her positive, gentle manner endeared her to the students.

In 1998, Marion was appointed the first Pastoral Coordinator of Holy Family parish to which she responded, "I am joyful, excited, and feel privileged to be called to this leadership role in Holy Family. I love the people . . . I look upon this as another way of 'being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love.'" In later years, she served Holy Family as an administrative assistant and as the director of the food pantry where the grateful recipients knew a caring community would serve them with dignity and love.

It was during her 20 years at Holy Family that she lovingly became known as "the church lady." In this role she commented, "The best times are when I see a change in a person, a change in who they are and how they live.... Many of the people in need here have a great resilient spirit."

Marion's final ministry was as Ba Marion (Grandmother Marion) to the Vietnamese Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters living at Mount Carmel. She, Sister Mary Crimmin, BVM, and the IHM sisters lived together in Deerfield on the ground floor of the Motherhouse. As a "housemother," she worked individually with the sisters, tutoring them in English, proofreading papers, and, most importantly, being a gentle, guiding presence. She dearly loved her "grandchildren."

The reading from Micah speaks beautifully of Marion's life. She acted justly, loved tenderly and walked humbly with her God (Micah 6:8). Marion spent a lifetime being present to others and addressing their needs through her generosity, compassion and attentiveness. She had a wonderful ability to recognize the irony in circumstances and infuse levity into difficult situations. Above all, Marion was faithful – faithful to her beloved family and friends, to the BVM community, to the people to whom she ministered and to God. Almost every place she went, people from her childhood or former ministries would greet her warmly and she remembered them easily.

When asked how she wanted to be remembered, Marion replied, "I want them to know how grateful I am for my BVM family and my family of birth . . . how blessed I was with a happy family at home and in the BVM community . . . and how much I loved them."

Marion, with affection we give thanks to God at every remembrance of you and the good works you completed for the sake of the gospel. May you rest in peace, joyfully reunited with your deceased family, friends and BVM sisters in God's loving presence.